



For Immediate Release:

Friday, February 18, 2011

Contact:

Julia Robertson

801-538-9161 (o)

801-910-6790 (c)

News Release

Alcohol in Pregnancy Warning Signs Go Up Early

Signs mean to help moms have healthier babies

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) helped launch a new effort to post mandatory signs warning of the dangers of drinking alcohol during pregnancy. Lawmakers, families and the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (DABC) today began placing the signs in nearly 1,900 locations where alcohol is served and sold.

Legislation passed during the 2009 legislative session requires the signs to be posted in establishments beginning July 1, 2011. But, thanks to the DABC, many went up early. Utah joins 23 other states with mandatory warning signs.

“There’s no reason for us to wait until the summer to start promoting this important message,” said DABC Director Dennis R. Kellen.

Kellen added the cost of creating the signs was minimal because pregnancy information was simply added to the existing DUI message already on the signs.

Women who consume alcohol while pregnant are at risk of delivering a child with a range of physical and mental problems called Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD). FASD can include birth defects, behavioral problems and learning disabilities and can have lifelong implications for the child.

“Giving the public information about the importance of avoiding alcohol during pregnancy is an important step in helping mothers and babies,” said Al Romeo, UDOH Pregnancy Risk Line counselor. “Damage to fetuses from alcohol use can occur in each trimester of pregnancy, but the damage is completely avoidable,” he added.

-MORE-

The Federal government has mandatory warnings on all alcoholic beverage containers, but there are no federal regulations that require alcohol retailers to post warnings about the risks of drinking during pregnancy.

“We now have another tool in our arsenal to reduce the number of mothers who drink while pregnant,” said UDOH Acting Director Dr. David Patton. “We know that prenatal exposure to alcohol is the leading cause of preventable intellectual disabilities.”

It is estimated that each year in the United States more than 40,000 babies – 1 in every 100 births – are born with FASD. FASD rates are higher than those of Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis, spina bifida and sudden infant death syndrome.

For more information about the effects of alcohol on a fetus, call the Pregnancy Risk Line at 1-800-822-2229 or visit www.pregnancyriskline.org.

#

The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.